

**UZBEK FOLKLORE AS THE MOST IMPORTANT DISCIPLINE IN
UNDERSTANDING NATIONAL IDENTITY**

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Abstract: This article examines the pivotal role of Uzbek folklore as an academic discipline in strengthening and shaping national identity. Folklore, which encompasses oral traditions, myths, legends, epic narratives, historical songs, riddles, and proverbs, serves as a cultural foundation through which the worldview, philosophy, and spiritual values of the Uzbek people are reflected. The study discusses how folklore preserves collective memory, transmits national values across generations, and forms a sense of belonging and unity. It also analyzes the educational importance of folklore in modern society, especially in the context of globalization, where cultural identity is increasingly exposed to external influences. The article concludes by emphasizing that studying folklore as a formal discipline is essential for cultivating patriotism, cultural awareness, and historical consciousness among the youth.

Keywords: Uzbek folklore, national identity, cultural memory, oral tradition, national consciousness, epics, values.

The study of folklore has been recognized worldwide as a crucial element in understanding the cultural identity of any nation. In Uzbekistan, folklore occupies an exceptionally important place due to its capacity to express the collective spirit, values, and historical experiences of the Uzbek people. The richness of Uzbek folklore — including heroics, lyrical epics, historical legends, fairy tales, proverbs, and ceremonial songs — forms a comprehensive cultural system that has shaped the worldview of generations.

National identity does not emerge spontaneously; it develops through shared traditions, collective memory, and a common value system. Uzbek folklore is the primary carrier of these elements. For centuries, it has preserved cultural codes, social principles, moral norms, and behavioral models that define the Uzbek nation. In modern times, when globalization often threatens local identities, folklore becomes a strategic resource for maintaining cultural continuity and safeguarding the uniqueness of the national spirit.

This article explores the importance of studying Uzbek folklore as a scientific discipline and demonstrates how it contributes to a deeper understanding of national identity.

Folklore is not merely a collection of tales or songs; it is a living phenomenon that reflects the collective memory of the people. Collective memory is a system through which a society remembers and interprets its past. Uzbek folklore contains countless references to historical events, moral struggles, communal values, and national dreams.

Epics such as *Alpomish*, *Gorogly*, and *Kuntug'mish* transmit ideals of bravery, justice, loyalty, and patriotism. They shape the moral imagination of the nation by presenting characters who embody the virtues valued by Uzbek society. Through these narratives, generations have come to understand concepts of honor, courage, family responsibility, and devotion to the homeland.

Historical songs and legends also preserve memories of migration, battles, political struggles, and cultural change. These oral texts serve as a supplement to written history, filling gaps in the nation's understanding of its past.

Thus, folklore functions as both a repository and interpreter of history, making it indispensable in forming national identity.

2. The Philosophical and Ethical Foundations Contained in Folklore

Folklore is deeply rooted in ethics and philosophy. Uzbek proverbs, for example, convey centuries-old wisdom regarding human behavior, social relationships, and moral obligations. They teach modesty, kindness, hard work, hospitality, and respect for elders — values that remain central to Uzbek society today.

Riddles and folk tales encourage intellectual curiosity and imaginative thinking, often containing hidden moral lessons. Mythological stories explain the origins of natural phenomena, offering insight into how ancient Uzbeks understood the world around them.

The ethical system embedded in folklore forms the basis of national character. These teachings create continuity between past and present, enabling the transmission of moral and cultural values from generation to generation. In the modern education system, folklore plays a crucial role in developing patriotic feelings and cultural awareness. When folklore is taught as an academic discipline, students gain:

1. Historical understanding — seeing how cultural values and traditions evolved.
2. Cultural stability — developing pride in their heritage.
3. Moral maturity — adopting ethical principles embedded in folk texts.
4. Aesthetic appreciation — recognizing artistic beauty in oral creativity.

Teaching folklore in schools and universities helps preserve cultural heritage at a time when globalization tends to standardize values and lifestyles. The young generation must understand the wisdom and worldview of their ancestors in order to build a stable sense of national identity.

Further, folklore education promotes creativity by encouraging students to analyze symbols, structures, and meanings within oral texts. It strengthens emotional intelligence and critical thinking, making it a valuable interdisciplinary field.

4. Folklore in the Context of Globalization

As the world becomes more interconnected, national cultures face both opportunities and risks. Globalization introduces new forms of communication, entertainment, and values, many of which may conflict with traditional norms. In this environment, preserving national identity becomes more complex but also more important.

Uzbek folklore serves as a cultural shield that protects national uniqueness. It ensures that even as society modernizes, it retains respect for spiritual heritage. Folklore promotes resistance to cultural homogenization by fostering pride in one's history, language, and traditions.

Moreover, Uzbek folklore has gained international recognition, and its study abroad contributes to the global appreciation of Uzbek culture. This helps strengthen the cultural image of Uzbekistan on the world stage.

5. Folklore as a Discipline in Academic Research

Scientific research on folklore has significantly expanded over the past century. Scholars have analyzed its linguistic, ethnographic, anthropological, semiotic, and literary aspects. As a discipline, folklore studies require specialized methods such as field research, textual analysis, classification of genres, and comparative studies.

Academic work in this field contributes to:

- the preservation of disappearing oral traditions,
- the reconstruction of historical-cultural contexts,
- the understanding of symbolic structures,
- and the promotion of cultural diversity.

In Uzbekistan, the systematic study of folklore has allowed researchers to identify unique national characteristics and differentiate Uzbek culture from other related traditions in Central Asia.

Uzbek folklore is not only an artistic expression but a cultural system that shapes national identity. It reflects the nation's worldview, historical memory, spiritual values, and ethical beliefs. Folklore plays an essential role in educating the younger generation, preserving historical consciousness, and strengthening patriotism.

As globalization continues to influence modern societies, the significance of folklore as an academic discipline becomes even more pronounced. It ensures cultural continuity, protects national uniqueness, and fosters a strong sense of belonging.

Understanding and studying Uzbek folklore means understanding the essence of the nation itself.

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